

"CRE Blurbs"

Collaborating Communities are Competitive Communities **Centers for Regional Excellence** **Building Models for Regional Collaboration**

CRE blurbs are snippets about each grant proposal submitted to the Centers for Regional Excellence program. Community names have been left out of the blurbs. The following blurbs give a brief look at what the submitted grant proposals proposed to do in regards to regional collaboration.

Sharing a Community Public Safety Building

The goal of this proposal is to build a “Community Public Safety Building” that would be shared by a city and a township. Government leaders from the city and the township propose to consolidate their police and fire services in the new building. They strongly believe that this project would help their communities remain competitive and reduce duplication of municipal services. They believe the project would increase cost savings while maintaining services, which would otherwise be cut or significantly reduced in effectiveness due to budget pressures. These communities, regardless if they are not considered for the CRE grant money, believe that regional collaboration is a “tool” that works and one that municipalities should put in their “tool-box” of available resources.

Regional Fiber Communication Consortium

City/county collaboration is the theme of this proposal. This applicant proposed to form a consortium of a number of public and non-profit agencies within the communities in the county and to expand a new fiber optic computer network that would provide greater communication and collaboration among the agencies and the communities. This project would bring together a variety of partners from various branches of government, educational, and non-profit sectors to work in a collaborative manner to improve communications and data exchange in the region. Eventually, the extension and strengthening of the fiber optic network would allow more entities to have truly high-speed electronic communications, which would increase organizational efficiency. The parties involved believe that the consortium would enable them to have better buying power with contractors, leading to reduced cost. According to this proposal the area participants have already established project goals and extensive partnerships have been formed to implement this project. They also state that there is tremendous support for building such a program in their area

Village/School District Sharing Resources

In this proposal a village and a school district proposed to form a collaborative partnership. In the proposal they discussed several areas of possible sharing and believe that working together with cost effective planning would mean substantial savings for both entities. They proposed to combine their bidding and purchasing of supplies, services and other materials for various functions within the community. They believe that by developing a system of combined purchasing each public unit could become more efficient. They also proposed to combine services in equipment repair. According to the proposal the school district has a large, modern vehicle repair facility and a certified mechanic to repair its

buses. They believe it would be a positive move and would offer savings to utilize the school mechanic and the bus garage to repair the village's heavier equipment. In addition to the above, the village and school district proposed to share personnel, and combine payroll and human resource functions. The proposal states that their village, as a small unit of government, does not have the budgetary resources to employ secretarial personnel and other vital staff members needed to efficiently run a village. Finally, they proposed to combine the village library with the school district library in an effort to cut cost.

Regional Geographic Information System Project

According to the proposal the project has attracted over fifty community leaders from every corner of the county. The goal of this proposal is to create a county-wide Geographic Information System that would be accessible to all cities, villages, townships and school agencies. The GIS would house common maps, data, and other geographic related information. The GIS would be used for land use planning, design of roads, utilities, drainage systems, law enforcement and fire safety planning, health management, and economic development. Many, if not most, governmental services are geographically based. Mapping and tracking information that is geographically based is central to local units of governments. The information can be used to allocate resources, track accident information, dispatch police and fire and for land use planning. The cost of collecting and managing the information can be very expensive. This proposal believes that by working together, there is a real and significant economy of scale and reduction in duplication of effort.

Non-motorized Mobility Corridor

Developing a model for cooperation, to provide safe non-motorized alternative routes to schools and/or other community activity centers in a suburban/semi-rural setting, is the major goal of this proposal. The proposed collaborative effort is between Townships, the County Road Commission, Schools and a Sheriff's Department. The collaborative effort would determine and develop cost efficient pilot projects for safe non-motorized routes to and between schools and community centers. The focus of the pilot project's improvement, according to the proposal, would be in a suburban/rural area where several impediments to safe non-motorized alternatives exist. The project would link several schools and several public institutions together using safe walk-able, non-motorized corridors.

Recreation Authority

The communities that put forward this proposal are currently strained for money. As a result the units of government are exploring ways to collaborate and cut cost. The communities have requested funding from the Centers for Regional Excellence to implement a joint recreation plan, the formation of a Recreation Authority, which would carry out the delivery of recreational services for residents of the region. The Recreation Authority would use the requested funding to provide for program management, public education, and the purchase/development of facility management and accounting software. The Recreation Authority would bring all recreation services under one umbrella.

Recreation & Open Space Project

This particular proposal involves six townships and one city; they are proposing to start a Recreation and Open Space Project. The seven jurisdictions are proposing to work together to make the Recreation and Open Space Project a success. The proposal states that the Recreation and Open Space Project is essential to the area because natural resources and recreation are the basis of their economies. The communities are working together to recognize common goals and to overcome barriers. Expected results from the collaboration include a multi-jurisdiction trail, green ways and waterfront plans, an organizational structure for receipt and disbursement of funds for maintenance, acquisition and development, and the creation of a Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance and scoring system for the whole area.

Sharing a Youth Center

With budgets cuts at all levels of government and public schools, it is imperative that agencies join together to supplement programs that can provide better services to citizens in need. In this proposal the area in question is lacking in affordable after-school programs for its most vulnerable population – its youth. Alone the city, village, and school district cannot afford quality after school programs, but by collaborating they can. The city, village, and school district propose to construct and share a Youth Center that will “help prevent young people from falling through the cracks.” Making sure that young children/teenagers, who are financially disadvantaged, receive opportunities to learn and congregate in a safe and drug-free environment, outside of regular school hours, is the main reason for collaboration in this proposal. The proposed shared Youth Center would be designed to increase the range and extent of positive experiences for at-risk youths. The Center will provide instructional programs for physical activities, clubs, tutoring, skills training and many other prevention and intervention services/activities.

City/County Parks and Recreations - Sharing Equipment, Staff, and Other Resources

This proposed collaborative effort would allow a city and a county parks and recreations commission to share equipment, staff, and other resources. The collaborative effort would provide a track record that would entice future partners to join the collaborative effort. The project would allow communities to reduce duplication of efforts. The funds would be used to hire a part-time Project Leader whose primary purpose would be to communicate with various key individuals within the city and the county. Communication is currently duplicated with calls from various people within the city and the county and it leads to major confusion and miscommunication. The Project Leader would eliminate the confusion and miscommunication by fielding the calls for both the city and the county regarding recreational activities.

Facilitate Development of Timely and Cost Effective Public Transit

With \$25,000 in support from the Centers for Regional Excellence the partnership would launch an initiative to strengthen its capacity for success and increase access to *Motown's Downtowns*. The proposed project would facilitate the development of a timely and cost effective public transit between *Motown's Downtowns* and the region's largest port of entry, Detroit Metropolitan Airport. The project would increase the visibility of *Motown's Downtowns* among visitors to Detroit Metropolitan Airport. The project would also call for enhancing partnership capacity by securing additional partners, pursuing grant opportunities, developing a sustainability plan, and identifying other areas for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among the participating cities. The collaborative effort would give airport travelers an option, stay at the airport and wait for your flight or catch a ride to *Motown's Downtowns* and experience all the region has to offer. The results would be that travelers would be enticed into spending their time and money at shops, restaurants, museums, and other businesses in metropolitan Detroit's original urban centers. The *Motown's Downtowns* partnership has determined that improving public transit between its downtown districts and Detroit Metropolitan Airport would greatly benefit the health and well-being of the region by increasing exposure to areas of the community travelers most enjoy visiting – vibrant downtown districts. The final result would be an improved image of *Motown's Downtowns*.

Project Initiated Economic, Community, and Tourism Development

According to the proposal, the area will bring two townships, three cities, a county and several state agencies together to plan on a regional basis for the protection, preservation, and reuse of historical, cultural, and natural sites found within the region. The funding will be used to help showcase iron ore mining history that significantly changed the path of our nation. A 40-mile trail system that would connect several communities would be constructed. This project calls for the developing of a warm weather non-motorized trail system. This system would enable residents and visitors to become healthier due to more exercise. The trail would also be used as an educational tool for residents and tourist. Also, many old historic building along the trail would be reused. The project would help create a healthy

tourism economy in the region. The Iron Ore Heritage Area is the biggest opportunity for regional economic development in the proposed area.

City/County Geographic Information System

Here a city and a county want to implement a pilot Geographic Information System that would be used by all local governments within the county. The collaborative effort would seek to apply current technology in an effort to enhance communications between governmental units thereby avoiding costly duplication of services. Another advantage of this ready to be implemented collaborative would be that the technology would offer rural communities an economic development and community marketing tool. This project would also allow the public a quick and easy means of identifying and locating real property assets online. This project would potentially help boost economic development, community development and the quality of lives in the county. The Geographic Information System would also be an extremely beneficial tool for community leaders, planners, developers and citizens.

Regional Public Safety and Code Enforcement

The communities in this particular region, if selected, want to use CRE funding to first regionalize cooperation by sharing information, equipment and facilities among their police, fire and public safety departments. They would also combine service coverage within the participating area through a rotating city duty schedule. Their plan is to eventually establish a regional public safety department. In its final form, a regional public safety department would retain a smaller core staff in each community, but would rely on the surrounding communities for support. According to the proposal, the benefits of regional public safety services include centralized administration, capital improvements savings and improved public safety prevention and response. The communities involved are proposing that changes be implemented in phases so as to be sensitive to the employment needs of current staff.

“Re-Building a Community” (Building and Trades Vocational Program)

Here a city and county requested CRE funding to be used as seed money to begin an on-site vocational building and skilled trades program. Monies from the grant would be used to purchase tools, supplies and a storage trailer to assist with the remodeling of an existing structure that would house the new vocational program. Students would work alongside certified home builders, gaining valuable hands-on experience. Many students need, in additions to their other studies, more technical and hands on training to succeed in today’s economy. The certified Building and Trades program would support students in learning a valuable trade. Through the program students would improve their math and science skills as they made specific measurements and learned the science of constructing structures.

Public Services Mutual Aid Authority

This proposal is requesting \$25,000 to implement a Public Services Mutual Aid Authority. They claim that their proposed regional collaboration activity would serve as a model throughout the state for regional cooperation and collaboration that could produce significant financial savings for communities struggling with budget shortfalls. The Public Services Mutual Aid Authority would provide a variety of public services such as public safety, water/sewer, parks, and street maintenance in times of emergency and necessity, ensuring mutual aid from participating communities in the most cost effective and efficient manner. Efficiency would be improved by eliminating duplication of similar services, through sharing resources. The goal of the project is to improve overall effectiveness, particularly connectivity and communication between all participating communities, thereby raising the level of performance for all, while hopefully cutting costs.

Joint Purchase of Software

In this proposal two communities want to jointly purchase and operate recreation activity registration and facility management software. Each department has explored, independently, the purchase of upgraded software that would allow residents to use the internet for activity registration. Use of the internet for registration purposes would provide cost savings to each department by reducing the staff time needed to process registrations. The joint purchase of software will enable the two participating communities to be more accessible to community residents on-line, and at the same time, reduce costs and staff time. Joint purchase would allow each community to be able to afford the software.

Regional Coordination of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services

“Human service transportation” means meeting the basic, day-to-day mobility needs of transportation disadvantaged populations, especially individuals with low-incomes, people with disabilities, and older Americans. Access to transportation is an especially timely and critical issue as the ranks of transportation-disadvantaged populations have grown and will continue to grow. Lack of transportation affects an individual’s independence and opportunity. As a result, this proposal’s main theme is providing flexible, cost effective, efficient, and affordable transportation services. The goals, according to the proposal, are to improve cooperation and communication between transit providers and those with mobility challenges; to improve and diversify transit services to all users; to increase efficiency by pooling resources; to standardize the method of human service transportation referrals to rural and small urban transit providers; and to streamline reporting of transportation service information and other data to state and federal agencies.

Specifically, the CRE grant funding would be used to purchase software (hardware if needed), customize the software, install the software and hardware, and then provide training in the use of the technology and communications software. The implemented technology would be used to assist with increasing coordination, increasing efficiency and streamlining processes. The technology to be explored would be a Client Referral, Rider-ship, and Financial Tracking system, a “real time” web-based client tracking software program. The technology would be designed to integrate human service transportation referral with daily rural public transit operations. Funding agencies would be able to view reports in real-time and track their transportation funds. Monthly statistical reports would be available to state agencies and the federal government. The system would improve the accountability of transportation use and costs, and would reduce misuse of transportation assistance. Since the system would be web-based, it would be available at any time, from any place, for authorized users.

Addressing the Digital Data Needs of Eight Counties Using Geographic Information Systems

According to this particular proposal, due to the rural nature and the constraints of some counties, a regional approach to GIS would be highly efficient and cost-effective. This applicant proposed to use the CRE grant funding with other funding to remedy the lack of digital data necessary for technology based GIS systems in the region. The regional GIS system would standardize processes for data entry/use; it would avoid duplicative efforts between agencies/departments. It would also ensure intra-county and inter-county software compatibility and it would support data sharing on a regional basis. The end product this proposal stresses is a cost-effective, high quality uniform GIS database, providing the foundation for delivery of programs and services in the highly distressed rural counties of Northeast Michigan. This program would allow county EMS personnel, planning commissions, land use planners and many others to see beyond municipal and county lines and would allow for better local planning.

Regional Methamphetamine Task Force

This proposal is asking for funding - to help improve the existing Regional Methamphetamine Task Force that is situated in the proposed area. The original objective of the task force was to begin the process of addressing/eliminating the methamphetamine problem within the county. The grant money would be used by the Task Force to cleanup methamphetamine contaminated homes and structures in the area. The proposal states that there exist no public health assurances for the innocent residents and

neighbors that live in or around a home or structure that has been used to manufacture methamphetamine. Children or individuals who inhabit homes with methamphetamine labs or homes that have not been properly cleaned up may inhale dangerous chemicals that can cause major health problems or death. The expected result of the proposed project is to enter homes/structures in the county that are identified as contaminated due to the manufacture/use of methamphetamine and properly decontaminated them prior to allowing re-occupancy.

Common Fire Station Alert System for Automatic Aid

The communities in this proposal state that they have found themselves locked in a struggle to provide for increasing demands for Fire and EMS services in the face of declining revenues. While calls for service increase, the staff available to respond decreased in the four communities represented in this grant proposal. It has become apparent to the four communities that the means to continue to provide high quality service to their citizens lies in regional collaboration. Only two of the communities have the capability for off site triggering of the fire station public address systems to alert and announce emergency responses. To economically move the four cities to a common station alert system capable of operation from any of the four dispatch centers will require collaboration. The CRE funds would be used to evaluate and acquire a station alert system for the communities. After the systems are acquired they will be installed in the Fire Stations. With the hardware installation complete, the task would then be to create common dispatch and response policies and procedures for the four Fire Departments, obtain the necessary agreements for automatic aid from the respective legislative bodies, and provide training to the dispatchers and firefighters on the operation of the new system.

Urban Service Districts and Boundaries

A coalition of urban areas began exploring ways to implement joint ventures for the creation of multi-jurisdictional service districts. Eventually they came up with a plan to create Urban Service Districts and Boundaries for their area. The coalition would use the CRE funding to provide staff support and technical expertise to guide them through the implementation phase of the regional collaborative effort. The benefits of Urban Service Districts would be potential cost savings and a higher level of services to citizens within the USD. Also, when one considers the bigger picture of establishing an Urban Service Boundary that limits urban services to bordering urban growth areas, that distinguishes between urban and rural service areas, the regional benefits are significant.

Marketing and Promoting City and County Industrial Parks

This proposal states that under the leadership of a Countywide Economic Development Corporation (EDC), two units of government are now working together. Through the Economic Development Corporation's leadership, strides to improve the infrastructure of the existing industrial parks have taken place and the two units of government are in agreement concerning growth that will benefit the community as a whole. The CRE funding would be used to hire a project manager to market and promote the city and county industrial parks and to help recruit industry to the area to enhance the economy. Such a person could do much to attract business to the area, find areas of mutual benefit, and help to smooth out any problems that arise. The Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the central UP in particular, is one of the most economically distressed areas in the nation. Small populations and remote locations from major markets, and declining resource-based industries, have limited employment opportunities. Any jobs created would certainly help keep families in the area.

Water/ Sewer Project

Here a few communities propose to use the CRE funding to help them better manage sharing water/sewer equipment and water/sewage facilities. Due to budget cuts the communities are struggling to find ways to become more economical while still providing quality services to their citizens. The communities believe that by sharing facilities and equipment they will cut cost but not valuable community services.

Consolidating 911 Dispatch Centers

Here a county is proposing to consolidate the 911 dispatch centers currently operated by two cities and form one county-wide dispatch center. Currently the two dispatch centers are county funded and it is hoped that consolidation efficiencies would be realized through the containment of operational cost as well as provision of services to the community. If selected the CRE funds would be used to assist implementation of the consolidation action plan currently being developed. The expected result would be a single, county-wide consolidated 911 dispatch center that would recognize efficiencies in the cost of operation as well as serve to county residents.

Area Geographic Information System (GIS) Authority

This project would create an on-line accessible and user friendly GIS application that would permit developers, municipalities, economic developers and local businesses free access to data and spatially based information. GIS is a computer application that links data, especially spatial or geographically specific data, to a map. Local governments identified in this proposal formalized a cooperative venture by establishing an Area Geographical Information Systems Authority. The Authority was formed to share resources and coordinate further enhancement of the GIS system established by the county. The new system is critical for planning and zoning, emergency management, telecommunications, data processing resources, transportation analysis, environmental data, taxation and assessment, infrastructure development and information sharing. To date thirty communities within the county have joined the Authority because of its many benefits. The Authority sees the CRE grant as an opportunity, a catalyst, which would allow the Authority to encourage more cooperation/collaboration in the form of economic development and smart growth. The grant would fund the development of web applications, data development and training that would permit participating parties and the general public to query and build maps that graphically display detailed information. The maps could help determine site selection, the location of subdivisions, and could even help local businesses determine new markets. This project would reduce competition among communities and would allow the region to better compete in the global market.

Regional Indicators to Measure Sustainability and Quality Of Life

Four participating Metropolitan Planning Organizations in West Michigan plan to develop a set of regional indicators that offer clear, tangible standards by which local governments, businesses and the nonprofit sector can measure the sustainability and quality of life in the West Michigan region. The indicators would offer new ways to understand West Michigan in a regional context. The regional indicators would be a set of specific measurements which provide a picture of a place over time. They would be tools used to measure what the region looks like and how activities are changing. The information obtained from the technical reports, created using the indicators, would be used by analysts and policymakers. The data in the reports, according the proposal, would be written in a way that would make sense and be useable by the general public. The indicators would be used to measure trends in social, economic and environmental systems. The reports generated would also report the reasons behind change. Examples of regional indicators established in other regions, according to this proposal, include median housing costs and housing trends.

Regional Police and Fire Service

This regional collaboration proposal has a total of seven cities, four townships and one county all working together to make collaboration work in their communities. The proposed regional police and fire service collaborative would focus on five key components including:

1. Designing, funding and construction of a Police and Fire Training Center.
2. Expand Mutual Aid Agreements.

3. Fire District Joint Purchasing Policy and Procedures – under the proposed plan, purchases would be planned on a regional basis based on the coverage, current regional equipment inventory and mutual aid agreements.
4. Fire Station Location Plan – the collaborative would examine current and planned locations to make adjustments in locations so that coverage and equipment would be better utilized.
5. Create a County-wide Geographic Information System Integrated with Emergency-911.

Metro Police Central Services Pilot Project

A coalition of Urban Mayors and Managers and a County Police Chiefs Association met to discuss challenges presented by diminishing financial resources, escalating operational costs and the expectation for continued service levels by governmental entities and police agencies. One of their solutions was the Metro Police Central Services Pilot Project, which involves a large number of participating police agencies from many different municipalities in the county. The project would address the issue of regional partnership and cooperation. The Metro Police Central Services Pilot Project would be an evolutionary step for partnerships among the law enforcement agencies within the county area. In addition to cost savings, the provision of services through a coordinated network would result in the delivery of higher quality and a broader spectrum of police services. Several specialized operations would be included as a resource for sharing, such as Crime Scene Investigations Team, Special Response Teams, Bomb Squads, K-9, Polygraph Units, Forensic Investigations, Emergency Management/Homeland Security, and others. Participating police agencies would be able to access specialized resources and share their specialized resources as needed. The potential cost savings would be significant.

County-wide Regional Economic and Community Development

“Progressive communities achieve success by creatively utilizing all available resources, including fiscal, natural, human, private, government, and others to enhance the overall quality of community life.” This applicant, with all its partners, would like to take the bold and unprecedented step of creating a countywide, regional economic and community development plan and the organizational structure to see that plan to fruition. They would create an enhanced and unified organizational structure for carrying out the economic development goals. The two existing economic development organizations, mentioned in this proposal, a County Industrial Development Commission and a County Chamber of Commerce will join forces under one umbrella of a newly formed organization. The proposed project would also assist existing industry to remain and expand within the county. They also propose to create a more targeted and aggressive program for attracting new business that will diversify the economy.

Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Camera System

Four communities along with their municipal boards, public works departments, and their planning commissions are engaged in this proposal. The four communities share a wastewater treatment plant and are now looking for funding to help them improve the function of their plant. The wastewater treatment plant would use the CRE funding to purchase a sewer infiltration and inflow camera system that would be used by all four communities. The camera would identify points of infiltration and inflow and damage to underground sewage pipes so that municipal leaders could determine if the leak requires repair by a third party or if it can be repaired internally. Also, water flows through multiple meters before reaching the wastewater treatment plant, resulting in confusion as to which municipality should pay for what sewage treatment; this is a significant issue which could cause conflict. The camera would help eliminate much of the speculation as to who should pay for what sewage treatment.

Solidifying Inter-local Agreements Already In Place

Here a city and a township with a long history of collaboration worked with an area economic development corporation to create the *Public Services and Utilities Consolidation Plan*. As a direct result

of the recommendations made in the study, the city and township successfully combined police and public works services: the township houses the police department and provides public safety to both the city and the township. The city houses the public works department and provides those services to both communities. Even though the current leaderships and electorate at both the township and the city are forward-thinking and partnership minded, the concern is that the current collaborations would be easy to disband should a future leader or elected body choose to do so. It is important that the agreements are properly executed so that there are high barriers to exiting the partnership by either party. The funds would be used to craft an action plan that would solidify the inter-local agreements already in place and devising recommendations for additional partnerships that create high impact benefits for both communities.

Area Summer Recreation Program

The Area Summer Recreation Program would be a collaborative effort of three communities, two cities and one charter township. The three communities have operated separate summer recreation programs, providing recreational opportunities for school-aged children. Due to budget constraints one of the communities has already discontinued its summer recreational program. The other two communities are also facing budget constraints that could eventually lead to the discountenance of their programs. One of the communities has a larger than average percentage of school-age children and adolescents and losing their summer recreational program could be devastating. These communities believe that by pooling their resources together, they can continue to offer, and even improve, recreational opportunities for the children and adolescents of the three areas.

A Coordinated/Connected Parkland/Open Space System

Responding to residents concerns about increasing development and the preservation and protection of vital lands, a plan was prepared to demonstrate how this region could connect and coordinate the various boards, funding programs and policy initiatives to protect and preserve natural feature complexes, open space, farmland and riparian corridors. This resulted in the creation of the “A Coordinated and Connected Parkland and Open Space Plan.” The funding here would be used to “create an interconnected system of open space throughout the region that supports ecological functions, biodiversity, water quality, productive farmland, recreational opportunity and scenic character for current and future residents.” It is recognized, according to the proposal, that over the long run, the preservation of the region’s high-quality open space resources would be a very important strategic element in the region’s continued success.

Village/Township Geographic Information System

Here a Village and a Township are excited to present a proposal for creating a GIS database that they would share. CRE funds would be used to pay for the implementation of the Geographic Information System, which includes paying for hard/soft-ware and the technicians needed for the installation. Their long term goal is to eventually convince all the municipalities in the county to invest and participate in the GIS program. They determined that they will use their collaboration as a model to show the rest of the townships and the county how valuable the collaborative program can be in daily use.